



MONTE HALE

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

Nº84

Monte Hale

WESTERN

10¢



MONTE HALE
THE **BIGGEST AND BOLDEST**
REAL-LIFE COWBOY OF THEM ALL
6 ft. 5 in. OF SOLID MUSCLE

WANTED
THE
OUTLAW TRIO





WEB COMIC
UNIVERSE.COM

CACTUS



NOTHING CHEAP ABOUT HIM!

(SIGH) HYAR COMES ANNABELLE!
(SIGH) GOSH, SHE SHORE IS PURTY!



HOWDY, ANNABELLE!

H'YA, CACTUSBRAIN!
WHUT ARE YUH DOING 'ROUND HYAR THIS TIME OF DAY?



I GOT A PRESENT FER YUH!

A PRESENT?



THEY'S RIGHT!
WE'RE ENGAGED SO I BOUGHT A DIAMOND RING FER YUH!

A DIAMOND RING!



I HOPE IT'S NOT A CHEAP IMITATION!

CHEAP IMITATION NOTHING---



---THEY'S THE MOST EXPENSIVE IMITATION I COULD BUY!



ATOMIC MOUSE ★ BADGE OF JUSTICE ★ BLUE BEETLE ★ COWBOY LOVE ★ COWBOY WESTERN ★ DANGER and ADVENTURE ★ FUNNY ANIMALS—MERRY MAILMAN ★ GABBY HAYES ★ HOT RODS and RACING CARS ★ LASH LeRUE ★ MONTE HALE ★ MY LITTLE MARGIE ★ ROCKY LANE ★ SIX-GUN HEROES ★ SOLDIER and MARINE ★ SPACE ADVENTURES—ROCKY JONES, SPACE RANGER ★ SWEETHEARTS ★ TEX RITTER ★ This Is SUSPENSE ★ TRUE LIFE SECRETS ★ TV TEENS—DON WINSLOW of the NAVY ★ WIN-A-PRIZE ★ ZOO FUNNIES, NYOKA, JUNGLE @RL

Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.



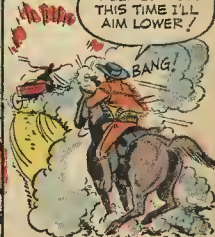
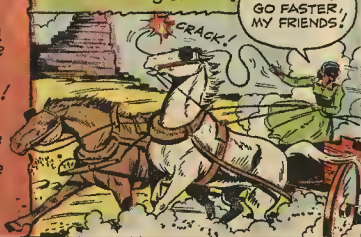
MEXICO had many cruel bandit leaders who waged bloody revolutions! But none could equal the swagging firebrand, **EL LEON!** With the cruel wiles of his jungle namesake, this evil genius aroused the peasantry of Acatera Province to a savage uprising! The beautiful Carlotta Monter, gunrunner for the revolution, would have given her life in his cause... until Monte Hale intervened!

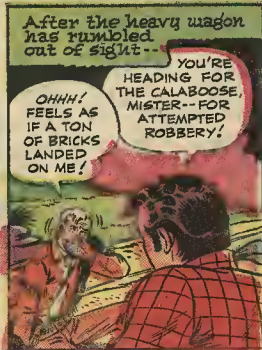
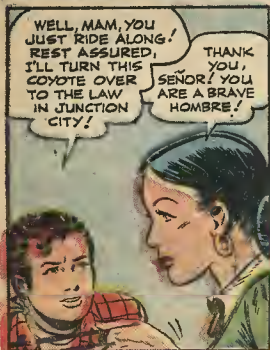
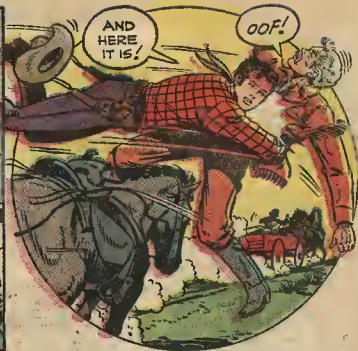
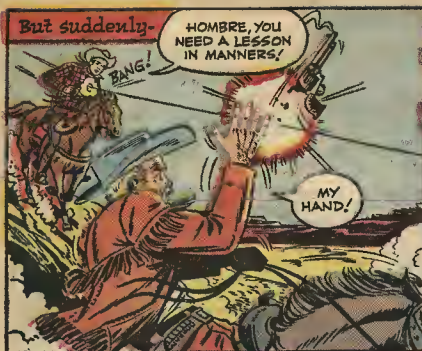
A few miles above the Mexican border, a terrified woman lashes a team of thundering horses!

FASTER!
YOU MUST
GO FASTER,
MY FRIENDS!

And riding close behind her--

STOP!
PULL UP--OR
THIS TIME I'LL
AIM LOWER!

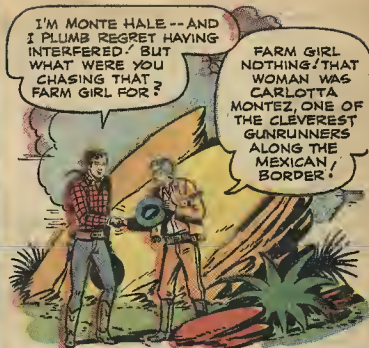






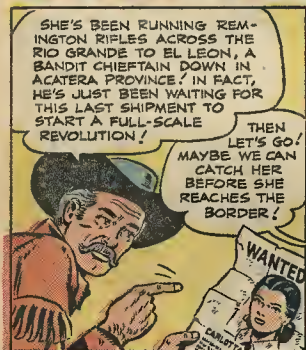
I SURE CAN! HERE ARE MY OFFICIAL CREDENTIALS, PLUS A LETTER FROM THE U.S. MARSHAL IN JUNCTION CITY!

JEHOSHAPHAT! I'M MIGHTY SORRY, MISTER WILEY!



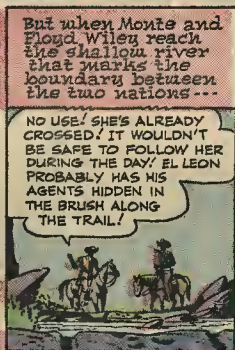
I'M MONTE HALE -- AND I PLUMB REGRET HAVING INTERFERED! BUT WHAT WERE YOU CHASING THAT FARM GIRL FOR?

FARM GIRL NOTHING! THAT WOMAN WAS CARLOTTA MONTEZ, ONE OF THE CLEVEREST GUNRUNNERS ALONG THE MEXICAN BORDER!



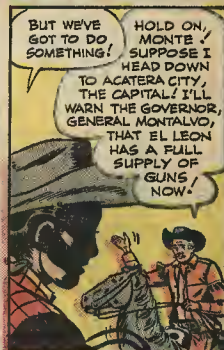
SHE'S BEEN RUNNING REMINGTON RIFLES ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE TO EL LEON, A BANDIT CHIEFTAIN DOWN IN ACATERA PROVINCE! IN FACT, HE'S JUST BEEN WAITING FOR THIS LAST SHIPMENT TO START A FULL-SCALE REVOLUTION!

THEN LET'S GO! MAYBE WE CAN CATCH HER BEFORE SHE REACHES THE BORDER!



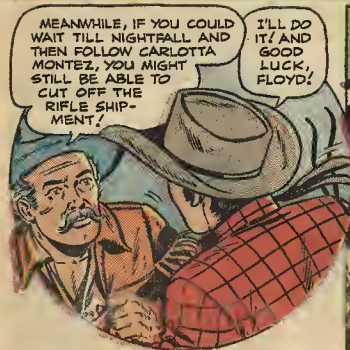
But when Monte and Floyd Wiley reach the shallow river that marks the boundary between the two nations---

NO USE! SHE'S ALREADY CROSSED! IT WOULDN'T BE SAFE TO FOLLOW HER DURING THE DAY! EL LEON PROBABLY HAS HIS AGENTS HIDDEN IN THE BRUSH ALONG THE TRAIL!



BUT WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

HOLD ON, MONTE! SUPPOSE I HEAD DOWN TO ACATERA CITY, THE CAPITAL! I'LL WARN THE GOVERNOR, GENERAL MONTALVO, THAT EL LEON HAS A FULL SUPPLY OF GUNS NOW!



MEANWHILE, IF YOU COULD WAIT TILL NIGHTFALL AND THEN FOLLOW CARLOTTA MONTEZ, YOU MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO CUT OFF THE RIFLE SHIPMENT!

I'LL DO IT! AND GOOD LUCK, FLOYD!



But that night, as flickering campfires gleam in a bandit camp to the south--

HALT! WHO GOES THERE?

PUT DOWN THAT RIFLE, YOU FOOL! TELL EL LEON THAT CARLOTTA MONTEZ IS HERE!

CARLOTTA! YOU HAVE MADE IT OVER THE BORDER AGAIN! BRAVO!

I WAS ALMOST STOPPED, MI AMIGO! BUT I MANAGED TO GET THROUGH WITH THE RIFLES!

YOU ARE A BRAVE GIRL, CARLOTTA! TONIGHT WE WILL STRIKE AND OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT!



At dawn, as Monte Hale cautiously rides through the chaparral far to the south of the Rio Grande--

GREAT DAY! THE UPRISING HAS BEGUN! CARLOTTA MUST HAVE GOTTEN THE RIFLES THROUGH!

BANG! BANG!



I RECKON I'LL KEEP GOING UNTIL I CAN MAKE CONTACT WITH EL LEON'S FORCES AND SEE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT! I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR HAVING LET THOSE SMUGGLED RIFLES GET THROUGH!



As Monte rides through the day, he sees many grim and terrible sights!

PARO, THIS SURE IS TERRIBLE! THE REBEL TROOPS HAVE SLAUGHTERED HUNDREDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THESE VILLAGES! LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND OUT FROM THOSE PEOPLE HIDING OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE!



SEÑOR, DO NOT HARM US! HAVE PITY ON THESE CHILDREN AND OLD PEOPLE!

DON'T WORRY, MISTER! I'M NOT MIXED UP IN THIS RUCKUS! BUT TELL ME, DIO EL LEON'S SOLDIERS DO ALL THIS?



SOLDIERS? THEY ARE CUTTHROATS AND THIEVES! THEY MASSACRED OUR FAMILIES AND ROBBED AND LOOTED OUR HOMES!

GENERAL MONTALVO IS A GOOD GOVERNOR! HE IS KIND AND HONEST! BUT IF EL LEON TAKES OVER, OUR LIVES WILL BE RUINED! HE LOOKS LIKE AN ANGEL, BUT HE HAS THE BLACK HEART OF A DEVIL!



As Monte rides on--

I'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING! MAYBE THIS BANDIT CHIEF DOESN'T REALIZE WHAT HIS TROOPS ARE DOING. I MAY BE ABLE TO TELL HIM AND HAVE HIM STOP THESE ATROCITIES!



But as Monte cautiously approaches the rebel camp at nightfall---

LOOK! A GRINGO SNEAKING UP ON US!

CAPTURE HIM AND TAKE HIM TO EL LEON!





FIRST
COME,
FIRST
SOCKED!

KA-POW!



Standing like a mighty
colossus, Monte staves
off the rush of furious
rebels! But suddenly--

BAH! IN
THIS ARMY
I MUST DO
EVERYTHING
MYSELF!

WELL DONE, MY LEADER!
THIS GRINGO IS AS BIG
AS A BULL AND AS
MEAN AS A WILDCAT!

THUD!

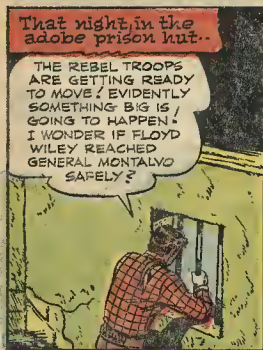


TAKE THIS
INTRUDER--
SHOOT HIM
AND LEAVE
HIM FOR THE
BUZZARDS!

WAIT, EL LEON! LISTEN!
THIS IS THE FOOLISH
AMERICAN WHO HELPED
ME GET ACROSS THE
BORDER SAFELY! HE
MUST HAVE FOLLOWED
ME TO YOU! WHY NOT
LOCK HIM UP AND
KEEP HIM AS
A HOSTAGE



BUENO! WHEN I HAVE
CAPTURED ACATERA CITY
I WILL HAVE HIM EXECUTED!
THROW HIM IN THE
PRISON!



That night, in the
adobe prison hut--

THE REBEL TROOPS
ARE GETTING READY
TO MOVE! EVIDENTLY
SOMETHING BIG IS
GOING TO HAPPEN!
I WONDER IF FLOYD
WILEY REACHED
GENERAL MONTALVO
SAFELY?



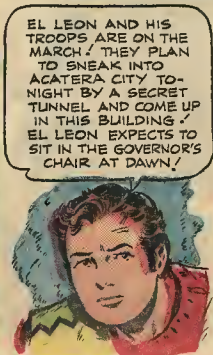
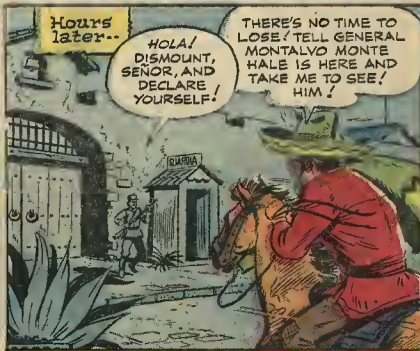
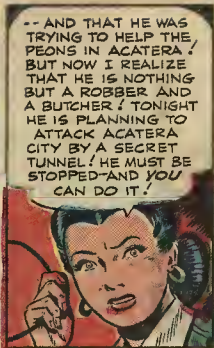
Suddenly--

CLICK!



SOMEONE'S
COMING IN!
IT'S CARLOTTA
MONTEZ!

DO NOT
MAKE A
SOUND,
SEÑOR! I
MUST TALK
WITH YOU!



Soon, in the secret tunnel..

CARLOTTA, HEAR ME!
THAT GRINGO ESCAPED
AND I FEAR YOU
HELPED HIM! IF
THIS IS A TRAP, I
YOU SHALL DIE.

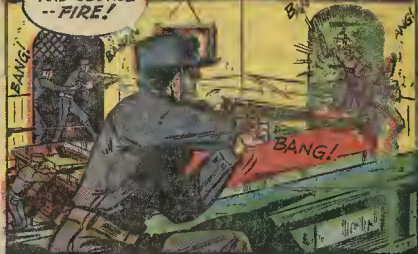
BE
CAREFUL,
EL LEON! WE
ARE ALMOST IN
THE GOVERNOR'S
PALACE!



As the rebel
troops emerge..

FOR
FREEDOM
AND JUSTICE
-- FIRE!

AAAGGH!



WE ARE BETRAYED,
EL LEON! WE WILL
BE WIPED OUT!

BANG!
CARRAMBA!
I FEARED
THIS!



YOU WERE
WARNED,
CARLOTTA!
NOW DIE!



No sooner has El Leon
fired than a gun
barks in answer!

NOW IT IS
YOUR TURN,
TRAITOR!

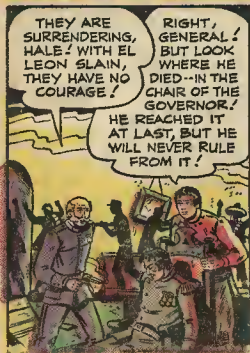
AGH!



THEY ARE
SURRENDERING,
HALE! WITH EL
LEON SLAIN,
THEY HAVE NO
COURAGE!

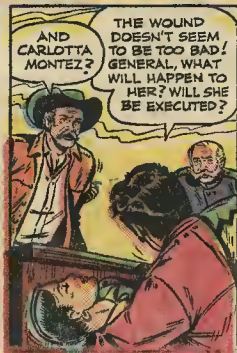
RIGHT,
GENERAL!
BUT LOOK
WHERE HE
DIED--IN THE
CHAIR OF THE
GOVERNOR!

HE REACHED IT
AT LAST, BUT HE
WILL NEVER RULE
FROM IT!



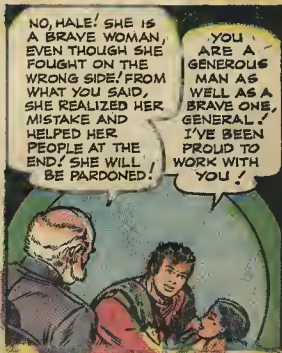
AND
CARLOTTA
MONTEZ?

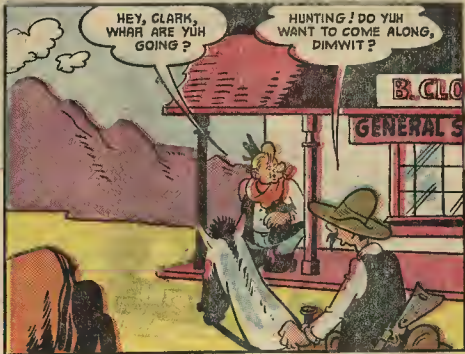
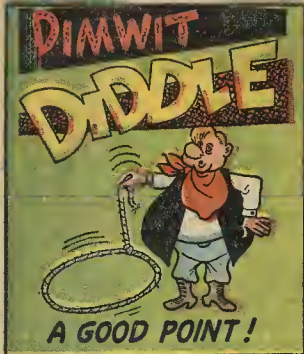
THE WOUND
DOESN'T SEEM
TO BE TOO BAD!
GENERAL, WHAT
WILL HAPPEN TO
HER? WILL SHE
BE EXECUTED?



NO, HALE! SHE IS
A BRAVE WOMAN,
EVEN THOUGH SHE
FOUGHT ON THE
WRONG SIDE! FROM
WHAT YOU SAID,
SHE REALIZED HER
MISTAKE AND
HELPED HER
PEOPLE AT THE
END! SHE WILL
BE PARDONED.

YOU
ARE A
GENEROUS
MAN AS
WELL AS A
BRAVE ONE,
GENERAL.
I'VE BEEN
PROUD TO
WORK WITH
YOU!





**FOR TOPS IN ENTERTAINMENT
READ THE FOLLOWING
APPROVED COMICS**

**WATOMIC
MOUSE**

THE FAMOUS TV AND RADIO STAR,
Merry Mailman

NYOKA
THE JUNGLE GIRL

**Six-Gun
Heroes**

EXTRA!! the BLUE BEETLE RETURNS!!
SPACE ADVENTURES presents
BLUE BEETLE

**DON
WINSLOW**
STAR OF TELEVISION, MOVIES, RADIO

king of the bullwhip
LASH LARUE
WESTERN

MOTION PICTURE AND TV STAR
Rocky Lane
WESTERN

**TRUE
Life Secrets**

**MY LITTLE
MARGIE**

HOT RODS
- Racing Cars

TEX BITTER
WESTERN

**COWBOY
WESTERN**

**Romantic
Story**

10¢

NOW AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND!

10¢

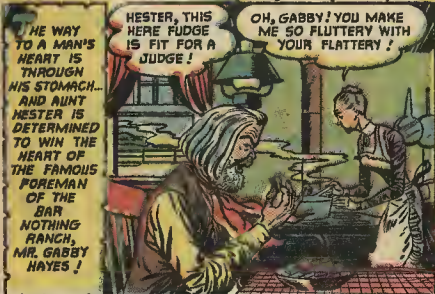
GABBY HAYES

and **FEARLESS FUDGY**

DON'T DARE
BUDGE!
GIVE ME
YORE FUDGE!

I'LL SET A TRAP
FOR THAT FUDGE
BURGLAR OR MY
NAME ISN'T
AUNT HESTER!

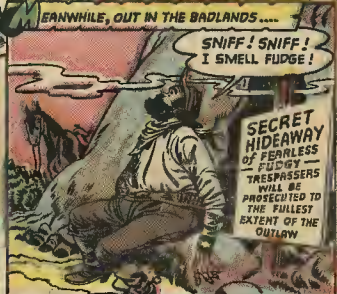
I'LL FERRET OUT
THAT FUDGE FLEECER
OR MY NAME AIN'T
GABBY HAYES!



HESTER, THIS
HERE FUDGE
IS FIT FOR A
JUDGE!

OH, GABBY! YOU MAKE
ME SO FLUTTERY WITH
YOUR FLATTERY!

THE WAY
TO A MAN'S
HEART IS
THROUGH
HIS STOMACH...
AND AUNT
HESTER IS
DETERMINED
TO WIN THE
HEART OF
THE FAMOUS
FOREMAN
OF THE
BAR
NOTHING
RANCH,
MR. GABBY
HAYES!



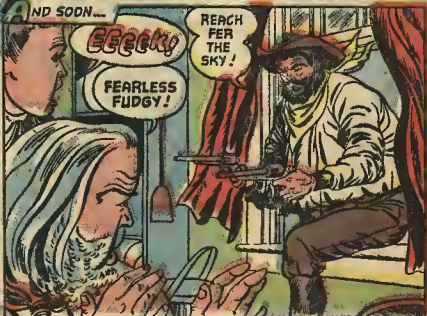
MEANWHILE, OUT IN THE BADLANDS....

SNIFF! SNIFF!
I SMELL FUDGE!

**SECRET
HIDEAWAY**
of **FEARLESS
FUDGY** —
TRESPASSERS
WILL BE
PROSECUTED TO
THE FULLEST
EXTENT OF THE
OUTLAW



SHAKE A LEG,
HORSE! I SMELL
FUDGE AT THE
BAR NOTHING
RANCH!



AND SOON...

EEEEK!

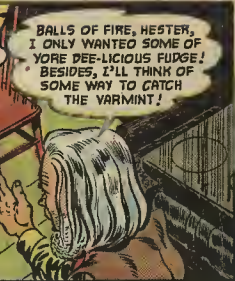
FEARLESS
FUDGY!

REACH
FER
THE
SKY!





A LITTLE LATER....



AND GABBY DOES GET AN IDEA... EVENTUALLY!



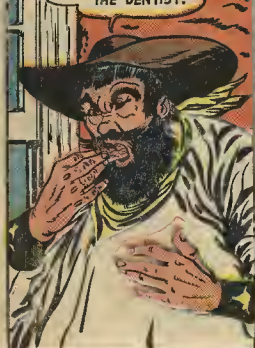
YES! MAKE LOTS OF IT! WE'LL PLANT IT ALL OVER TOWN! WE'LL CATCH THAT VARMINT! YOU'LL SEE!



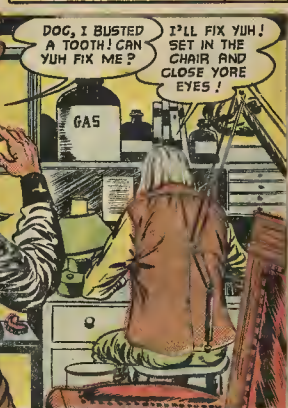
HESTER FINALLY AGREES TO GABBY'S PLAN AND LATER....

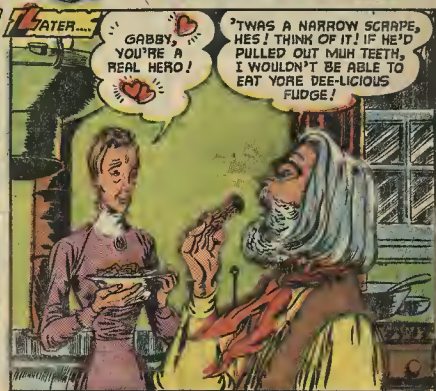
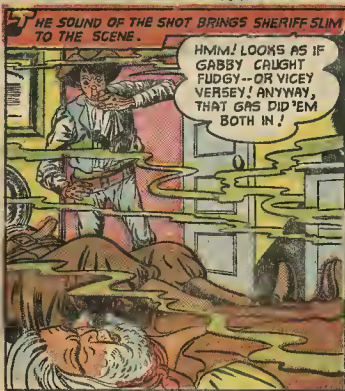
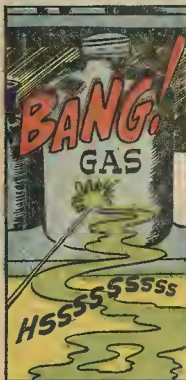
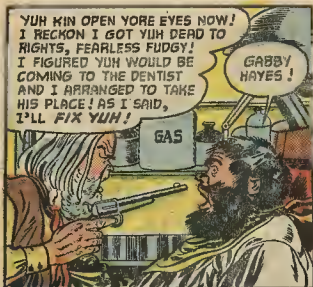


OW! I'VE BUSTED A TOOTH! I'LL HAVE TO GO TO THE DENTIST!



AT THE DENTIST'S OFFICE....





MONTE HALE

in GRUBSTAKER'S BARGAIN

IT'S
MONTE HALE,
ALL RIGHT,
BOSS!

THEN
WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR,
YOU LUNKHEADS?
BURY HIM
ALIVE!

For many years, the lonely prospectors who combed the West in search of pay-dirt, have been befriended by men who would set them up with equipment and supplies. Crackerbarrel Caulkins was such a grubstaker! Or so it seemed -- until one morning when Monte Hale stood in a deserted mine shaft, staring up at a ruthless figure that menaced his life!

Crackerbarrel Caulkins owned a trading post in the Brazos country, where every man knew and liked him!

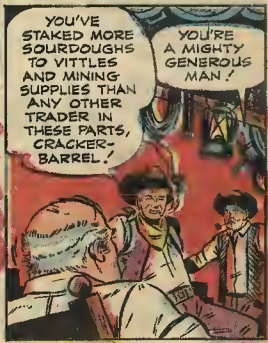
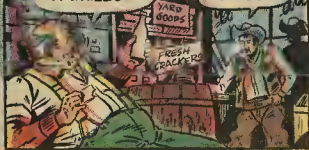
HOWDY, BOYS! HELP YOURSELF TO SOME CRACKERS AND SET DOWN FOR A SPELL! MIGHT AS WELL RELAX ONCE IN A WHILE!

THAT'S RIGHT, CRACKER-BARREL! AND YOU SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF US!

WELL, I JEST NEVER DID LIKE TO WORK! BUT IF ANY OF YOU HOMBRES EVER WANT TO SET OUT PROSPECTING, REMEMBER I'LL ALWAYS BE WILLING TO GRUBSTAKE YOU!

YOU'VE STAKED MORE SOURDOUGHS TO VITTLES AND MINING SUPPLIES THAN ANY OTHER TRADER IN THESE PARTS, CRACKER-BARREL!

YOU'RE A MIGHTY GENEROUS MAN!



Monte Hale had always felt as other men did about Crackerbarrel Caulkins! But one night, as Monte lay curled up in his sleeping bag---

MONTÉ!
WAKE
UP!

HUH?

WHO ARE--WELL
JINGLING SPURS!
IT'S A
GIRL!

THAT'S
RIGHT,
MONTÉ!
I'M JEAN
CARTRIGHT,
AND I NEED
YOUR HELP!

JEAN CARTRIGHT? THAT
NAME SURE SOUNDS
FAMILIAR! DIDN'T YOU
AND YOUR
BROTHER
COME TO
BRAZOS
A WHILE
BACK?

YES, AND
THAT'S WHAT
I WANTED
TO TALK TO
YOU ABOUT.

KEN AND I DID
SOME PROSPECTING
UNTIL WE RAN OUT
OF MONEY. THEN
WE WENT TO
CRACKERBARREL
CAULKINS FOR
HELP!

GOOD OLD
CRACKER-
BARREL! I
RECKON HE'S
THE MOST
GENEROUS SOUL
IN THESE PARTS.
DID HE STAKE
YOU?

HE SURE DID! WE
AGREED THAT IF
WE FOUND ORE,
WE'D SPLIT EVEN
WITH HIM! AND
THIS TIME WE HIT
A RICH VEIN! WE
REPORTED TO
CRACKERBARREL---

"--AND HE WAS MIGHTY GLAD TO
HEAR ABOUT THE STRIKE!"

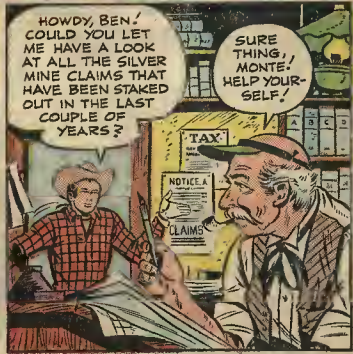
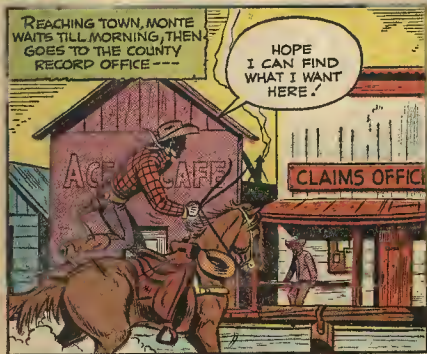
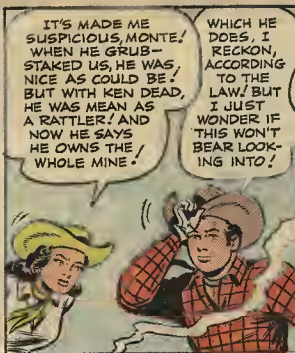
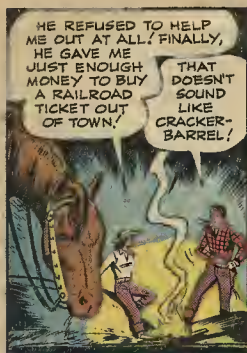
GREAT WORK, KIDS!
WE'LL START MINING
IMMEDIATELY ON A
BIG SCALE!
WE'LL SPLIT
EVERYTHING
EQUALLY!

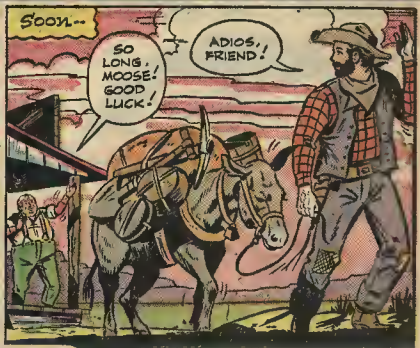
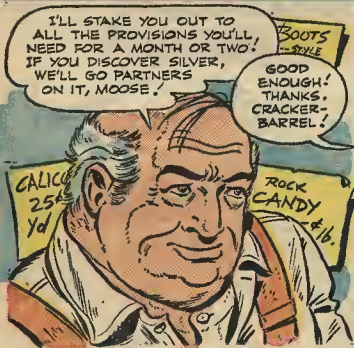
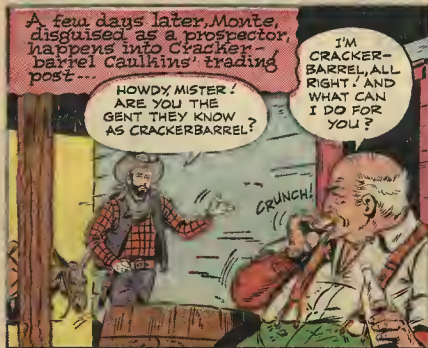
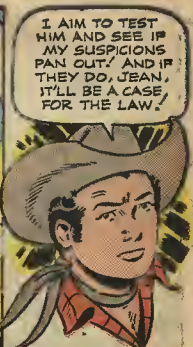
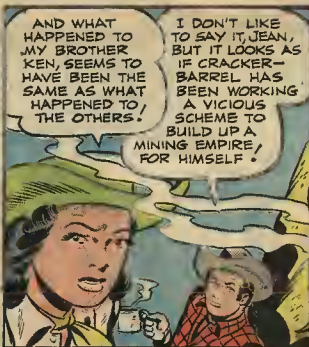
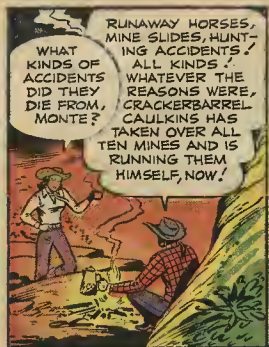
GOOD
ENOUGH!
YOU'VE SURE
BEEN KIND TO
US, CRACKER-
BARREL!

BUT THAT VERY
NIGHT, KEN WAS HIT
BY A RUNAWAY
WAGON AND
KILLED!

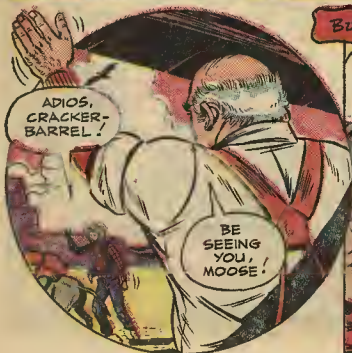
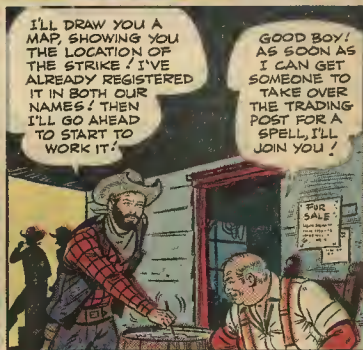
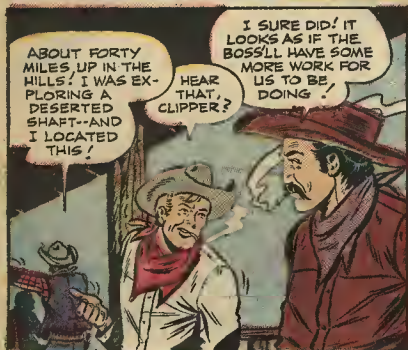
I'M SORRY, JEAN!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN
A TERRIBLE SHOCK TO
YOU, LOSING YOUR
BROTHER LIKE THAT!
BUT THEN WHAT
HAPPENED?

I WENT TO CRACKER-
BARREL! HE SAID THAT
KEN HAD BEEN HIS ONLY
PARTNER IN THE SILVER
MINE AND NOW, SINCE
KEN WAS DEAD, HE
WAS THE SOLE
OWNER!

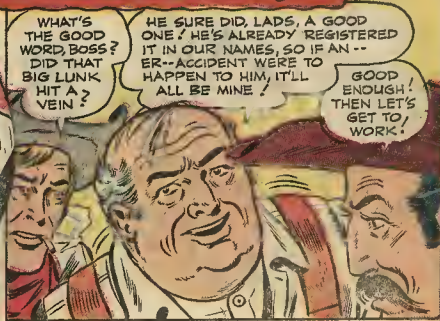




A week later-



But when Monte is out of sight...



The next day, as Monte plods beneath a broiling sun--

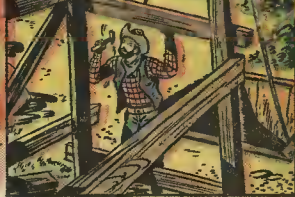
HMM! BY TURNING MY HEAD SLIGHTLY I CAN SEE BEHIND ME! AND WAY BACK THERE ARE A BUNCH OF RIDERS FOLLOWING ME!



WHICH MEANS I'LL HAVE TO PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT IF I AIM TO COME OUT HOLDING THE WINNING HAND! I'LL SOON BE AT THE OLD MINE SHAFT--AND THAT'LL BE THE START OF THE FRACAS!



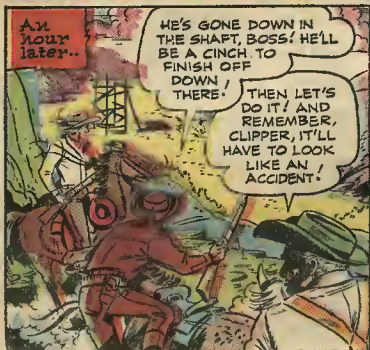
GOT TO WORK FAST! I'LL RIG THIS SCAFFOLDING UP CLOSE TO THE SHAFT! THEN WHEN CRACKER-BARREL AND THE OTHERS ARRIVE--THINGS'LL BEGIN TO POP!



An hour later..

HE'S GONE DOWN IN THE SHAFT, BOSS! HE'LL BE A CINCH TO FINISH OFF DOWN THERE!

THEN LET'S DO IT! AND REMEMBER, CLIPPER, IT'LL HAVE TO LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT.



MOOSE! RAISE YOUR HANDS PRONTO OR WE'LL GUN YOU!

CRACKER-BARREL! I DON'T GET THIS!



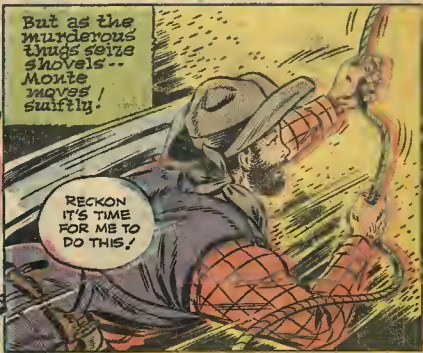
OF COURSE YOU DON'T! THEY NEVER DO UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE! ALL RIGHT, BOYS! DUMP A PILE OF ORE DOWN ON HIM! IT'LL LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENTAL SLIDE!

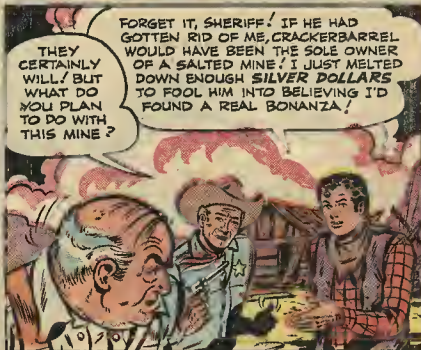
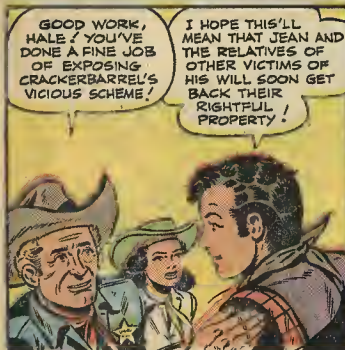
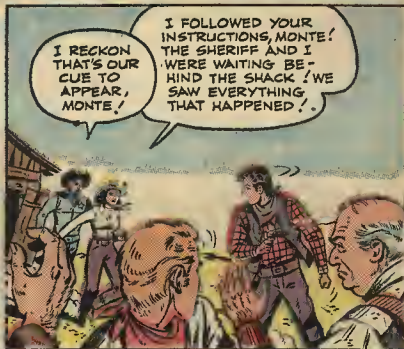
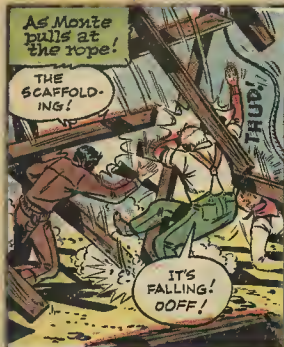
HERE WE GO!



But as the murderous thugs seize shovels--Monte moves swiftly.

RECKON IT'S TIME FOR ME TO DO THIS!







WAHITA MERCY

A Gray Hawk Story



OVER THE PRAIRIE land, the buffalo grass rippled softly in a gentle, curving movement. Slowly, Gray Hawk and the other Otapi youths crawled forward. As they moved through the high grass, their keen dark eyes roved from right to left, exploring the terrain. They were searching for two things—the buffalo herd so badly needed for food by their tribesmen, and for sign of the cruel Wahita warriors who ruled the prairie. Suddenly as they crawled forward, one of the Otapi boys lifted a trembling hand . . .

"Stop!" he whispered urgently. "Up in that clump of pin oak—over the ridge! I see something moving! Perhaps it is a Wahita scout!"

Gray Hawk squinted his eyes toward the distant grove. "I see nothing," he decided. "Probably it was just the wind, Little Bear. Let us keep moving."

Again the dusky striplings crawled through the grass but as they approached the clump of pin oaks, a blood-curdling cry rent the air! It was the war challenge of the Wahitas—the rulers of the plains country! At once, a number of brilliantly feather and be-daubed warriors sprang up from hiding!

"There are too many for us!" cried Gray Hawk. "And look! They are led by Sharp Lance himself! Quick! Let us flee!"

Whirling about with the grace of a forest creature, Gray Hawk sped away. His long sinewy legs pumping frantically, he was soon out of bow-range of the enemy Wahitas. But even as he sprinted down a trampled buffalo wallow, Gray Hawk realized that he was alone. Turning and looking back, he saw that his friends had been captured by the plains warriors!

For a moment, realizing that it was his foolhardiness that had led the Otapi youths into an ambush, Gray Hawk felt the wild impulse to attempt to free them in a sudden surprise attack! But then, better sense prevailing, he crouched beside an elderberry bush and watched, his eyes slitted . . .

"They have not harmed Little Bear and the others thus far," he mused to himself. Evidently they are going to take them back to their village." His fists clenched with anger and desperation. "I will trail them! Somehow,

I will set them free—or I will die with them!"

As the towering, broad-shouldered Wahita braves paced along the prairie with their bound prisoners, Gray Hawk followed them, being careful to stay a considerable distance behind.

Even at this distance, however, he could make out distinctly the giant form of the cruel chief known as Sharp Lance. He could envision the jagged scar slashed on the side of his face that he had once obtained in battle with the Otapi tribe. He could even glimpse the white bracelet worn about his wrist—the bracelet that men said Sharp Lance had carved from the skull bone of a slain foe! With every step, Gray Hawk felt the pangs of terror stabbing at him. But he had no choice. His friends had been captured—and it was his fault. He had to rescue them!

That night the Wahita war party reached its village, set in a narrow valley in the foothills of the Gran' Pere range.

The Otapi youths were freed of their cruel bonds and flung bodily into a long bark hut—a prison chamber which was much like the ceremonial huts built by the Eastern Indians. Wriggling stealthily through the clustering mountain laurel that surrounded the camp, Gray Hawk soon reached the prison hut.

Crouching by it, he tapped lightly on its bark side. Within a moment, he was answered by a tapping from within.

"Hello! Hello in there," he hissed sibilantly.

"Who is that?" came the answer.

"Gray Hawk! Listen," he continued, "I am going to try to get you out of there! This hut is too strongly built for me to cut a hole—and the foundation is probably too deep to burrow under. So I will build a fire against the side. Soon it will flare up . . . and a hole will be opened. You must break through as soon as it is weakened enough. When you are clear, scatter and return to our village one by one! Do you understand?"

"Yes! It is well!" came the soft reply.

Quickly, Gray Hawk knelt by the rough bark siding of the hut. He shredded some of the bark with his keen edged knife and crumpled dried moss beneath it. With his flint and steel he struck a spark. The tiny orange fire caught—and grew. Soon it was licking up the side

of the bark hut. Within a few moments, the blaze was growing, catching hungrily at the hickory struts of the hut, swarming wider and wider.

Playing that the blaze would not be detected until his friends had escaped, Gray Hawk sprang backward into the brush.

Now the fire rose higher, and higher! Soon its angry crackling was audible to the ear! Just as the first Otapi youth came lunging through the hole that had been created, Gray Hawk heard a shout of alarm from the center of the Wahita village.

"A fire! There is a fire in the prison hut!"

But now, one by one, the Otapi boys were hurtling swiftly through the flaming hole in the side of the hut! They were singed and burned slightly—but they were not seriously hurt. As they disappeared in the night, Gray Hawk, waiting there, smiled. He saw the aroused Wahita braves, wielding weapons, race in furious pursuit. But he knew that sheltered by the black night and with a head start, his friends would have an excellent chance of escaping! His plan had worked!

Now it was time for him to flee, before the enraged Wahita braves returned.

Turning to slip, fox-like, through the brush, Gray Hawk suddenly heard a frightened cry behind him. Whirling, he saw that the sparks from the prison hut had dropped onto the thatched roof of the hut next to it. Quickly these new flames had spread, until the entire side of this hut was a blazing wall! Through the fire, Gray Hawk could see a woman and a child. Evidently they were terrified by the crackling of the flames and the searing heat of the licking, crimson tongues of fire.

They were trapped in the hut! For a moment Gray Hawk hesitated. After all, these people were the blood of his enemies. Why should he help them? But then, he decided, if they were *his* mother and *his* brother, he could not see them suffer such a terrible fate.

Snatching up a long timber that lay on the ground, Gray Hawk wielded it savagely. Within a few moments, he had knocked open a narrow section in the wall—wide enough for them to come through.

"Now!" he cupped his hands and shouted. "Come out! Escape."

But, paralyzed by fear, they did not move. Gray Hawk realized that he would have to go in to get them. Muscles tensing, he sprang through the opening into the inferno. With the heat searing his skin, he seized the woman and her child and pulled them toward the open-

ing. Then, just as he thrust them through, he saw one of the roof timbers of the hut falling toward him! Desperately, he attempted to dodge it, but he was too late! Showering sparks, the timber slammed against his head and shoulder, throwing him to the ground. The brutal impact sent the boy into a drifting, eddying maze of unconsciousness and pain. He lay there, dazed, as the flames licked about him...

When consciousness returned to the Otapi youth, he realized that he was lying safely on the grass outside, in the cool night air. But, looking up, he saw towering over him the giant form of Sharp Lance, chief of the Wahitas! And hulking impassively behind their leader were the other braves of the plains tribe.

Sharp Lance scowled down at Gray Hawk. "You! Otapi spawn! You are the one who followed your captive fellows here—and who built the fire to free them! Is that true?"

Weary muscles responding, Gray Hawk forced himself to stand up. "That is... so..." he replied.

The mighty chief's face was like a graven image of stone—with the single frightening scar looking like a slip of the sculptor's tool. He frowned. "And when you had set them free, boy, you returned, to rescue the squaw, and the child who were in the next hut. Is that so?"

Gray Hawk inclined his head. "That is... so..." he muttered again.

SUDDENLY, he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. Looking up, he saw with amazement that Sharp Lance was smiling at him. "Listen, boy," the Wahita chief said, "that woman was my squaw! And that boy was my son—some day to be ruler of these plains. You saved them both... and we owe you an eternal debt!" Quickly, he drew the carved bone bracelet from his wrist. "Take this, lad! Return with it to your people, and show it to them as an evidence of our lasting gratitude and our friendship. Tell them that never again need there be war between the Wahitas and the Otapi! Now, go..."

As Gray Hawk turned and, smiling, ran for the forest edge, he could feel the bracelet gripped between his slender fingers. Now, he knew it was too big for him. But some day, he declared, he would wear it, and it would fit him well...

THE END

Don't miss the exciting GRAY HAWK
adventure each month in MONTE HALE
WESTERN.

BROKE BETSY

WELL NAMED!

WHY ARE YOU LATE THIS MORNING?

ER, ER, I WAS READING MY GEOGRAPHY LESSON AND I GOT SO INTERESTED I FORGOT WHAT TIME IT WAS!

OH, YOU GOT SO INTERESTED IN YOUR GEOGRAPHY LESSON, YOU FORGOT THE TIME! WELL, I'LL SOON FIND OUT IF YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH!

GULP!

NAME SIX WILD ANIMALS FOUND IN AFRICA!

(ULP) ER, ER...

COME NOW, BETSY! IF YOU READ YOUR GEOGRAPHY LESSON LIKE YOU SAID, YOU CERTAINLY SHOULD BE ABLE TO NAME SIX WILD ANIMALS!

ER, ER, I CAN TEACHER ---

---FOUR LIONS AND TWO ELEPHANTS!

HA!
HA!

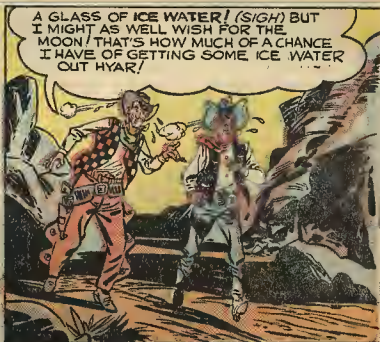
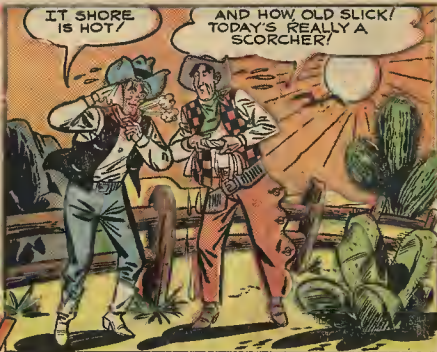
THE BLUE BEETLE

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

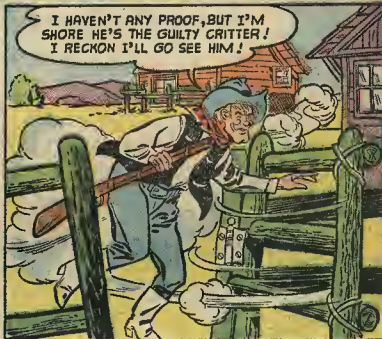
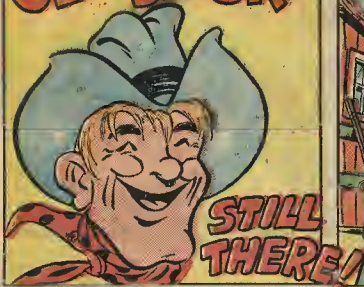
AMERICA'S CRUSADER
OF
LAW AND ORDER

10¢ NOW AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND! 10¢





OLD SLICK



MONTE HALE

in THE BUILDING OF SHANDA DAM

YOU'RE
COFFIN BAIT,
HALE! EVEN IF
WE DON'T FINISH
YOU---SHANDA
DAM WILL!

BANG!
BANG!

For centuries, America's western lands suffered from terrible droughts and floods! To protect themselves against these ravages of nature, the farmers of Shanda Valley determined to build a huge dam! But power-proud cattlemen joined to prevent its completion! Shanda Valley trembled with the threat of a range war until Monte Hale raced Pardner toward a fury-filled, torrent-lashed fight to the finish!

ONE DAY,
HIGH IN THE
ROCKIES---

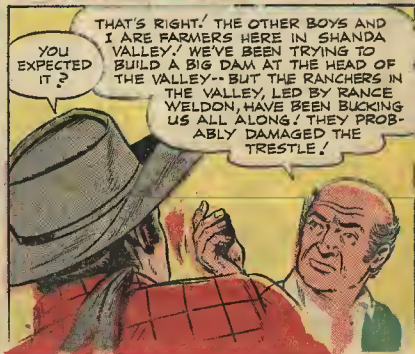
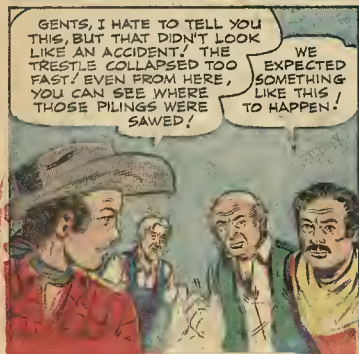
SLOW
THERE,
MULE!

CAREFUL, JOSH!
WE'VE GOT NOTHING
BUT PINE BOARDS
AND A FEW STRONG
PILINGS BETWEEN US
AND THE HEREAFTER.

MEANWHILE,
ON A NEARBY
TRAIL---

GREAT DAY!
LOOK THERE, PARD!
THAT TRESTLE'S
COLLAPSING--AND
THE MEN ON IT ARE
FALLING INTO THE
RAVINE BELOW!

CR-RASH!



WE NEED THE DAM TO PROTECT US FROM FLOODS AND TO SAVE WATER FOR IRRIGATION IN TIME OF DROUGHT, BUT THE CATTLEMEN MOSTLY HAVE ENOUGH NATURAL SPRINGS TO GIVE THEM GRAZING WATER!

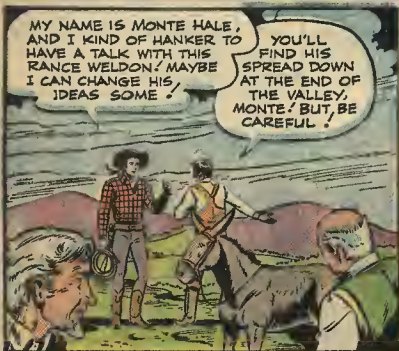


WELDON AND THE OTHERS FIGURE IF THEY CAN FORCE US OUT OF THE VALLEY, THEY'LL HAVE ALL THE LAND FOR THEMSELVES! THEY EVEN HIRED A BAND OF BORDER GUNSLICKS TO DO THEIR BLOOD-SPILLING FOR THEM!



MY NAME IS MONTE HALE, AND I KIND OF HANKER TO HAVE A TALK WITH THIS RANCE WELDON! MAYBE I CAN CHANGE HIS IDEAS SOME!

YOU'LL FIND HIS SPREAD DOWN AT THE END OF THE VALLEY, MONTE! BUT, BE CAREFUL!



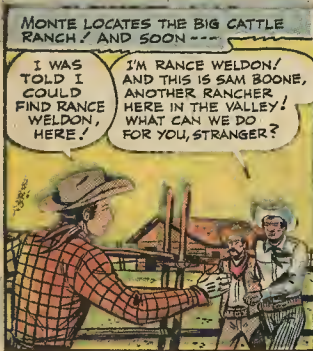
PARD, THIS LOOKS MIGHTY BAD! I HOPE WE CAN HAVE A TALK WITH WELDON AND KEEP THIS RANCE WAR FROM FLARING UP!



MONTE LOCATES THE BIG CATTLE RANCH! AND SOON ---

I WAS TOLD I COULD FIND RANCE WELDON HERE!

I'M RANCE WELDON! AND THIS IS SAM BOONE, ANOTHER RANCHER HERE IN THE VALLEY! WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU, STRANGER?



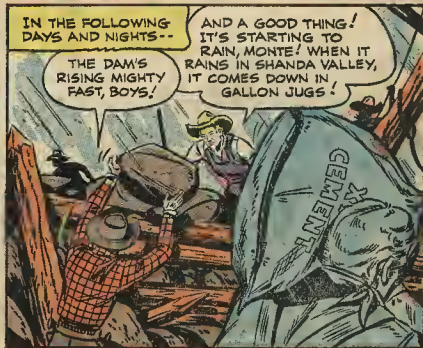
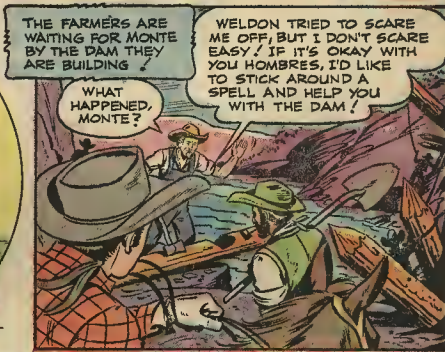
SOME FARMERS UP AT THE HEAD OF THE VALLEY HAVE BEEN HAVING A MITE OF TROUBLE BUILDING A DAM AND THEY SAY YOU'RE BEHIND IT, WELDON! I CAME TO TALK PEACE!



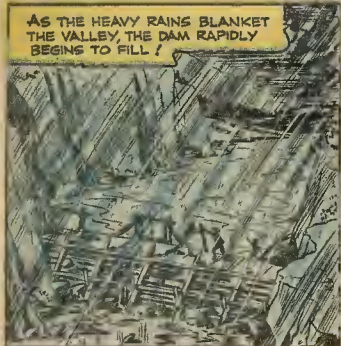
PEACE, EH? THAT'S A LAUGH! YOU GO BACK AND TELL THOSE NESTERS THERE WON'T BE PEACE IN SHANDA VALLEY UNTIL THEY'RE OUT OF IT! THEY BETTER VAMOOSE FAST, EH, BOONE?

TH-- THAT'S RIGHT, RANCE!





AS THE HEAVY RAINS BLANKET THE VALLEY, THE DAM RAPIDLY BEGINS TO FILL!



SUDDENLY!

SNIPERS!
BELOW US
ON THE
MOUNTAIN-
SIDE!

MUST BE RANCE
WELDON'S MEN!
THEY ARE HOLED
UP SO WE CAN'T
SEE THEM ---AND
THEY AIM TO GUN
US DOWN!

BANG!
BANG!



LET'S FLUSH THEM OUT
PRONTO! I'LL TAKE THIS
END OF THE SAW AND
YOU TWO GENTS
GRAB THE OTHER
END! WE'LL LOWER
THE BOOM
ON THEM!



AS THE WELL-HIDDEN OUTLAWS
CONTINUE THEIR FIRE, THE
GIANT PINE BEGINS
TO TOPPLE ---

CRAACK!

WELDON!
LOOK! THAT
PINE! IT'S
COMING
DOWN---



RUN
FOR YOUR
LIVES!

KARASH!



THAT'LL TEACH WELDON
AND HIS OWLHOOTS TO
LEAVE OUR DAM ALONE!

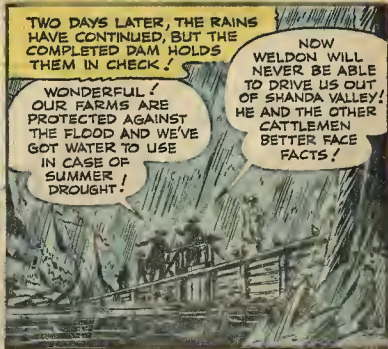
I HOPE SO!
BUT I'VE GOT
A HUNCH HE'S
GOT ONE MORE
ACE UP HIS
SLEEVE!



TWO DAYS LATER, THE RAINS
HAVE CONTINUED, BUT THE
COMPLETED DAM HOLDS
THEM IN CHECK!

WONDERFUL!
OUR FARMS ARE
PROTECTED AGAINST
THE FLOOD AND WE'VE
GOT WATER TO USE
IN CASE OF
SUMMER!
DROUGHT!

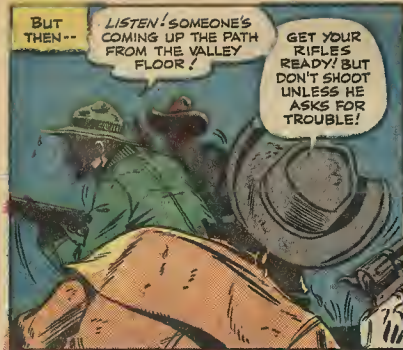
NOW
WELDON WILL
NEVER BE ABLE
TO DRIVE US OUT
OF SHANDA VALLEY!
HE AND THE OTHER
CATTLEMEN
BETTER FACE
FACTS!



BUT
THEN--

LISTEN! SOMEONE'S
COMING UP THE PATH
FROM THE VALLEY
FLOOR!

GET YOUR
RIFLES
READY! BUT
DON'T SHOOT
UNLESS HE
ASKS FOR
TROUBLE!



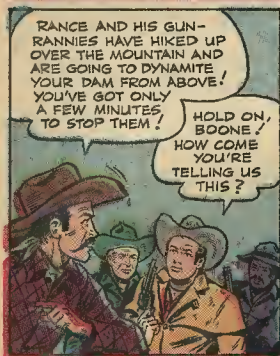
DON'T SHOOT, I'VE GOT
MY KIDS WITH ME! I AIM
TO WARN YOU ABOUT
RANCE WELDON'S
PLANS!

IT'S
SAM
BOONE!



RANCE AND HIS GUN-
RANNIES HAVE HIKED UP
OVER THE MOUNTAIN AND
ARE GOING TO DYNAMITE
YOUR DAM FROM ABOVE!
YOU'VE GOT ONLY
A FEW MINUTES
TO STOP THEM!

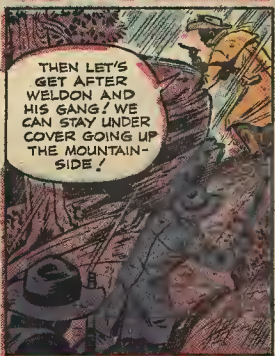
HOLD ON,
BOONE!
HOW COME
YOU'RE
TELLING US
THIS?



I WAS FORCED TO GO
ALONG WITH WELDON
AND THE OTHER
CATTLEMEN! BUT IF HE
EXPLODES THE DAM, MY
RANCH WILL BE WASHED
AWAY BY THE FLOOD!
I HAD TO JOIN YOUR
SIDE AND WARN
YOU!



THEN LET'S
GET AFTER
WELDON AND
HIS GANG! WE
CAN STAY UNDER
COVER GOING UP
THE MOUNTAIN-
SIDE!



MEANWHILE---

LIGHT THE FUSE
AND LOWER THE
DYNAMITE DOWN,
OVER THE DAM.
IT'LL BLAST IT TO
BITS AND COVER
THE FARMLAND
WITH WATER!

AND WE'LL BE
PROTECTED FROM
THE EXPLOSION--
AND FROM HALE
AND THOSE
PLOWHANDS!



LOWER AND LOWER
SWINGS THE DYN-
AMITE --- AND THE
FUSE SPUTTERS
CLOSER AND CLOSER
TO IT'S DEADLY
COMPANION!

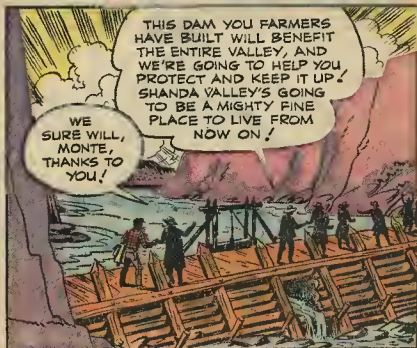
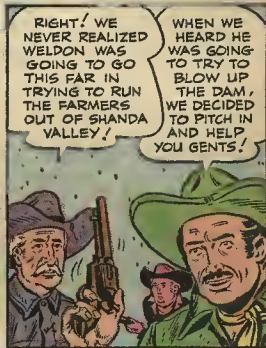
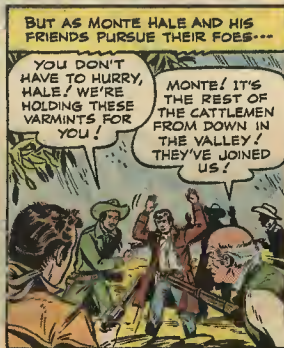


BUT SUDDENLY---

THAT'S
ENOUGH, GET
BUSY, WELDON,
AND HOIST
THAT LOAD
OF DYNAMITE
BACK UP!

HALE! NO!
WE CAN'T!
IT'LL KILL
US ALL
BEFORE WE
CAN PUT OUT
THE FUSE!





TEN GALLON TEX

"A MATTER OF PRIDE!"

THAR'S MR. FINLEY! HE'S GOT MORE PRIDE THAN ANYONE ELSE IN TOWN!

YO'RE LOCO IF YUH SAY THAT!

WHAT DO YUH MEAN, TEN GALLON TEX?

I MEAN THAT THAR'S NOBODY IN THE WHOLE WORLD WHO'S GOT MORE PRIDE THAN ME!



I'VE ALWAYS HAD A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF PRIDE! WHY, I EVEN HAD IT AS A BABY!



AS A BABY?

I SURE DID! WHY, I WAS SO PROUD WHEN I WAS BORN, THAT I DIDN'T OPEN MY MOUTH FER TWO YEARS---



---I DIDN'T WANT MY MOTHER TO KNOW I DIDN'T HAVE ANY TEETH!



GASP!

MOLASSES MOUTH



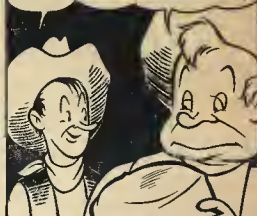
WHAT A WASTE!

HEY, MOLASSES MOUTH, WHAT HAVE YUH GOT THAR?

SOMETHING FER MY HOUSE I JEST MADE!



WHAT? A WASTE BASKET WITH A CLOSED TOP!



(GASP!) JEEEPERS, WHAT'S THE IDEA OF MAKING A WASTE BASKET WITH A CLOSED TOP?



I DON'T LIKE TO THROW ANYTHING AWAY!

(GASP) !!!

